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THE KARAITE LITERARY OPPONENTS OF SAADIAH GAON IN THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES.

TWELFTH CENTURY.

29¹. Jacob b. Reuben is the author of a Hebrew compilation on the Bible, entitled ספר העשר, which exists in manuscript in several libraries (Leyden, Paris, St. Petersburg), and a part of which (from Jeremiah to the end, excluding Psalms) is also in print (Eupatoria, 1836). He lived in Byzantium, and as he already uses 'Ali b. Sulejmân (see Harkavy in *Jew. Encycl.*, VII, 442 b *supra*), he probably belongs to the first half of the twelfth century². Jacob's chief source was the commentary of Jefet b. 'Ali, whom he reproduces mostly in a very abbreviated form, and the passages having reference to Saadiah must have been taken for the most part from this commentary. All these passages (with the exception of a single one) occur only in the portion on the Pentateuch, and have been communicated by Pinsker (pp. 83 seq.) and Steinschneider (*Cat. Lugd.*, p. 25). They are (1) Gen. i. 1 : ופֶתַח פִּיתוּמֵי בְרֵאשִׁית : וי"א שהבית נושא ; אול מא בלק אלך ; cf. also Ibn Ezra, ad loc. :

¹ The numbers are continued from vol. XVIII, pp. 209-240, and from vol. XIX, pp. 59-83.

² On the conjectured period of the life of 'Ali b. Sulejmân, see *supra*, vol. XIX, p. 71, n. 2. That he is used by Jacob b. Reuben was unknown to me when I wrote an article on the latter in the *Jew. Encycl.*, s.v. (VII, 41). To the literature there given must be added : Geiger, *אוצר נחמד*, IV, 25 ; Harkavy, *Altjüd. Denkmäler aus d. Krim*, p. 62 ; Steinschneider, *Polem. u. apolog. Liter.*, p. 347 ; Adolf Posnanski, *Schiloh*, I, 273. Cf. also the passages on 'Anân, communicated by Harkavy, *Stud. u. Mitt.*, VIII, 1, 152-155.

more interesting is another passage, where the sources of our cognition, according to Saadiah, are given, and it is stated, that his words can serve as a support to the Karaites (ג' תורה : דיוק ?) בזה דוק הפיתומי ומה שכתבנו עליו במאמרנו יעזרו לבעלי מקרא : משכילי נ"ע ויהי האל הנאור בנבורה : באמור ככה כי שרש השכל ועקר החכמה ועין המליצות שלשה מדעים בשורה : מדע המראה ומדע השכל ומדע הכרחי והוסיף אלהינו ית"ש לנו (עליה) גם מדע המשמע והוא ד' להתנברה . They are the same four sources of information that Saadiah discusses in the introduction to his religio-philosophical work, and Hadassi also drew from them without doubt¹. The other two passages deal with the argument from Josh. v. 11 for the correctness of the Karaite interpretation of מחרת השבת (Alphab. 224 ג), and with Saadiah's argument from Lev. xxvii. 32, that the enjoyment of an embryo is permitted (Alphab. 240 ט) . . . והפיתומי אמר באמור הכתוב העשירי יהיה קדש : מ . . לה' אם הקרה מעובר היה לוקחו כאחד ומוה מותר לנו המעובר כי הוא כאחד בחשבוננו ; ובטל פתרונים שאסרתם אותו לעם אלהיך : "נאמו לו משכילי נ"ע אי גונה הלבבות מאין לך כי נהיו [מ]עשרים מעוברות . . . והרבו² (עליו משכילי נ"ע תשובות אך מקצת הרמותי לך ולכל חרדי אלהיך

Hence here too the reading is like that in the Leyden MS. of the anonymous compilation on Exod. and Lev. (see above, vol. XIX, p. 83, n. 2. Could Hadassi perhaps have drawn from it, or the reverse? — הללו here most probably means "his wantonness" (see Ps. lxxv. 5).

¹ See *Amanât*, ed. Landauer, p. 12 infra: (אי מוא' אלוק) . . . ונקל אנהו (= כרע המראה) ולאחאניה עם אלעקל (= כרע השכל) חלה מוא' אלולי עם אלשאחר (= כרע הכרחי) . . . ואמא נחז נמאעה אימוהין . . . ובניף אליהו מאיה רבעה . . . וחי צהו אלבר אלצחק (= כרע המשמע) אך But it seems that Hadassi, in the fourth source, chose משמע not without intention (instead of, e.g., the הדגרה הנמשח in Ibn Tibbon), because this word among the Karaites signifies the Scriptures. Hadassi further adds: ועד אמר (ר"ל סעדיה) כי החורו' מתקיימות בשכל ובשמע ובקבלה ואמנ' דבריו השכל והקבלה שכל = מצות שכליות, אשר אינ' הורסות מה שכחו' בס' תורה אלוך of the commandments into precepts of reason (אלשראיע) and precepts of revelation (אלעליה), to which is also added truthful tradition (קבלה = כבר צדיקה); see *Amanât*, § iii. Cf. also Kaufmann, *Geschichte d. Attributenlehre*, pp. 1 seq.; Guttman, *Die Religionsphilosophie d. Saadia*, pp. 22 seq., 134 seq.

² This argument, as already remarked, is also advanced by Qirgisâni,

But besides these few passages, Hadassi now and again controverts the views of Saadiah without naming him, e. g. the assertion that אביב can signify the name of the month (Alphab. 190 :ם חרש האביב . . . ומי שאמר שמור את חרש האביב :ם Alphab. 190 . . . הוא שם לחדשך . . . עות המשפט והדרך כי לקחו ודמהו ממה שאמר תל אביב ; והוא שם מקום וכו' ; see above, vol. XIX, p. 61), or the explanation of חלבו והאליה as חלבו האליה (Alphab. 233 ; cf. *supra*, No. 23), and so forth. It must be against Saadiah also that those passages are directed in which Hadassi shows that in the Talmudical period the rule לא בר"ז פסח had not any validity yet (Alphab. 185 ש seq.), or that 1 Sam. xx. 18 is no argument for the great age of the calendar-system (Alphab. 197 ש seq.), or that one cannot conclude from Dan. x. 3 that the eating of meat was permitted in the Diaspora (see above, vol. XIX, p. 83), &c.

Besides the *Eshkol*, another fragment of Hadassi has been preserved, which Pinsker (pp. 94 seq.) has edited. The latter holds Tobias to be the author, but this time Firkowitsch, who ascribes it to Hadassi, has exceptionally hit upon the truth, as we find at the end quite explicitly (p. 97, l. 5) :¹ ואני יהודה בן אליה קטן החלמירים. This fragment is not a remnant of a Book of Precepts, but *collectanea* which Hadassi probably compiled as material for his *Eshkol*. Saadiah is mentioned a few times here also, and the matter at issue is that eternal question about the age of the calendar-system. According to Saadiah it is no argument against the great age of this system that there is nothing about it in the Bible, for reason does not forbid us to assume that God revealed, e. g. 100 precepts to his prophet,

Levi b. Jefet and Jacob b. Reuben (see *Kaufmann-Gedenkbuch*, p. 178, n. 2, and also *J. Q. R.*, XIX, pp. 62 and 69), but Saadiah's name is mentioned only by the last of these. As Jacob b. Reuben draws especially from Jefet, it may be presumed that the latter also handed down the name of the Gaon and has used to Hadassi as a source. But unfortunately I have not before me Jefet's commentary on this passage of Leviticus.

¹ Cf. also Frankl, *Monatsschrift*, XXXI, 77 seq. and השחר, VII, 50 ; Buber's introduction to the לקח מיר of Tobia b. Eliezer, p. 47.

and commanded him to write down only fifty of them, but to hand down the other fifty only orally, or not to fix any of them at all in writing. The precepts were indeed already known to the patriarchs, although they were not written down; similarly Mishna and Talmud already existed before, and were only later made into a record by the sages¹. Further, Saadiah maintains that the calendar with all its rules originates from Moses, and only when Šadok and Boethos, the two heretical disciples of Antigonus, also opposed the system, was the observation of the moon also made known [in order to show that both coincide]². The generally prevalent rules were again used as a guide, until 'Anân and Benjamin al-Nahawendi arose and again abolished the system that is of Sinaitic origin. Hadassi further reports in Saadiah's name about the wonders displayed by R. Eliezer in his dispute with R. Joshua (see *Baba Mešia*, 59 a), about the sacrifice brought with the Omer, the amount of meal to be used with the Omer, and finally about the argument from Josh. v. 11 for the Karaite interpretation of מִמַּחֲרַת הַשָּׁבָת and its refutation. This refutation agrees verbally with that by Jefet on Lev. xxiii. 15 in the *Kitab al-tamjiz* (Hirschfeld, *Arabic Chrestomathy*, p. 113, l. 24 seq.), and Hadassi also drew from this indirectly³.

¹ Saadiah had this argument in his commentary on the Pentateuch (p. 94, l. 23 : דע כי פירומי השיב על בעלי המקרא בפתרון שלו בענין החדש בעבור החשבון ; והעבור וכו' ; שיכתוב נ' read שיכתוב כ' l. 25, for ; והעבור וכו'). By the assertion that the patriarchs already knew the commandments, Saadiah means such sayings as קיים אברהם אבינו כל החוריה כלה and the like. In Karaite literature also it is discussed whether the Biblical precepts were binding before the Sinaitic legislation. I intend dealing fully with this problem, described as קדם אלפראיץ, in another connexion.

² With this is connected the answer of Ben Mashiah mentioned previously (cf. above, vol. XVIII, p. 224).

³ This follows from the fact that the words of Hadassi following upon the conclusions of Saadiah (p. 96, l. 17) : דע כי דברי בעל הפירומי באשר הביאו : ראייה מן ויאכלו מעבור הארץ כי הם ב' לולאות שריין אין הדבר כאשר וכו' אמא קול אלפיומי פי מא אחתנו : (Hirschfeld, p. 114, l. 20) : simply translated from Jefet (Hirschfeld, p. 114, l. 20) : כן. ויאבלו מעבור הארץ אנהא ערוהן מנהלחין פליס אלאמר כמא וכו'.

century (cf. *R. É. J.*, XLV, 192). His home cannot be determined, but as Karaite literature in this century has its centre in Byzantium, he should most probably belong to this century¹. The work of Elias has the form of an epistle to a Rabbanite (Jehuda b. Sabbatai?), and serves the double purpose of defending Karaism and attacking Rabbanism. Saadiah is not mentioned here explicitly, but Pinsker's conjecture seems to be right, that it is he who is meant by "the co-religionist of the receiver, who insulted 'Anân, the teacher of the Diaspora" (p. 103, l. 14: ולבן דתכם אשר חרף לענן משביל הגולה כנואם הננאם ודובר תמים (יתעבו למה לו תאמינו וכתב) There then follows in the "lying story" of this Rabbanite, as Elias expresses himself (וכתב), the well-known account about the advent of 'Anân². His injured ambition, following upon his removal from the Exilarchate in favour of his younger brother Hanania, drove him to Schisma. 'Anân was in mortal danger owing to the interference of the Arabian government. But following the advice of a Moslem scholar (Abu Hanifa?) imprisoned with him, he was able to win the favour of the Chalif by declaring that he represented a different religion from his brother, to wit, that in opposition to the latter he taught the fixing of the months on the basis of the observation of the moon and the consideration of the ripeness of the corn. The Chalif saw therein a concession to Islam, and showed him favour. Pinsker must also be right in saying that this report was preserved in Saadiah's above-mentioned polemical work.

THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

33. Jacob b. Moses Tamâni (of Taman in the Crimea), according to a tombstone inscription (Firkowitsch, אבני

¹ See Pinsker, p. 98. In the list of Karaite scholars at the end of the *דלות* (p. 106) only Tobias is mentioned of the well-known Byzantine Karaites; the citation of Hadassi, however, is not certain. See Steinschneider, l. c., 54.

² Cf. *R. É. J.*, XLIV, 166 seq.

זכרון, no. 98), was the head of a Karaite school, and the author of a work הפתרון ספר, and he was buried in 958 in Tschufut-Kalé. It goes without saying that the date of this inscription, on which the word Tamâni does not occur, was fabricated by Firkowitsch, as there were not yet in the tenth century in the Crimea any Karaite heads of schools, who had many pupils (המעמיד חלמירי רבי). It does not at all follow from the work mentioned (the beginning of which is missing) that it bore the title הפתרון ספר, and that its author was called Jacob b. Moses. It is more likely to have been, according to Harkavy (*Altjüd. Denkmäler*, p. 268), the work of an anonymous Byzantine Karaite of the twelfth or thirteenth century. In the few lines that Pinsker (p. 68) has published from this work, "the heretic" (המחלף = אלמכאלף) Saadiah is also mentioned a few times. We have, e.g. his explanation of Exod. iii. 2 (on the burning of fire on the Sabbath; cf. above, vol. XVIII, p. 232), then the assertion that analogy is not to be applied in the case of incest, and hence that it is not forbidden, as the Karaites maintain, to marry a niece¹; and lastly, Saadiah's explanation, mentioned often already, that interprets חלבו והאליה as חלבו האליה.

34. Jefet, called Ibn abi-l-Hasan al-Barqamâni, was a Karaite physician and author in Alexandria. A *terminus a quo* for his life is afforded by the fact that he quotes no later author than Moses Maimonides (מוסי אלקרטבי); a *terminus ad quem* is supplied by the mention of his name in a Karaite compilation on Deuteronomy of the year 1351 (see *infra*, No. 38). He must therefore be assigned, with Steinschneider (*Arab. Liter. d. Juden*, § 172), to the middle of the thirteenth century. Apart from a medical work, אלמקאלה אלמחסניה פי חפט אלצחה אלברניה (MS. in Berlin and Oxford), Jefet also composed a polemical work in Arabic against the Rabbanites, under the title ספר חשובה (MS. in

¹ ורב פיומי עם חבריו ההירו אותו מענה בת אחנה ובה אח ואמרו אין מקשין בעריות וכו' 'Anân already derives the prohibition to marry a niece from the analogy respecting the aunt: see *Kaufmann-Gedenkbuch*, p. 173.

St. Petersburg), which consists of seven sections (ונוה), and is said to be very violent (see *Monatsschrift*, XLII, 189). Here also Maimonides is quoted very often, and designated as ארריים מוסי (אלמולי ארריים) (also ארריים). A passage about Saadiah has been published by Gurland (גנוי ישראל), III, Russian part, p. 91: . . . ואדעו (אי אררבאנין) פי אלעבור אלנקל : כמא אדעו בעץ אלחכמים מתל רב סעדיה אלפיומי אן אלעבור הלכה למשה מסיני ואן אדם הראשון עבר עליה אלשהר ואלסנין אלך (cf. above, vol. XVIII, p. 218, n. 2).

35. Natan b. Jehûda is an otherwise quite unknown Karaite author. A passage in his name on the subject of calendar-lore is quoted in a Bodleian MS. of the year 1584 (Cat., vol. II, no. 2789, fol. 45 a; published *J. Q. R.*, VIII, 703) and in Moses Mişorudi's מצות משה, which was written in 1602 (MS. Leyden, p. 52⁷, fol. 247; see above, vol. XIX, p. 64, n. 2). The beginning of this passage reads: אני נתן בן יהודה נשאלתי שאלה זאת מן אלופי הקראים אשר הם יושבים בעיר אדום כי מאין לנו מן התורה שני ימים כסוי הירח וכו'. From these words we may infer that Natan did not live in Constantinople (עיר אדום) and that this city was still under Christian dominion. We are, therefore, perhaps not wrong in assigning him to the Crimea in the thirteenth century¹. From the same Bodleian MS. another passage from this Natan is communicated, which is directed against Saadiah's well-known explanation of the verse Gen. i. 14 (והיו לאותות; see *J. Q. R.*, l. c.), and here we read towards the end: וזה הטעם כתבתי אני : וזה בספרי אשר עשיתי תשובה על פיומי וכו'. Thus Natan also

¹ Simḥa Isaac Lutzki (ארח צדיקים, f. 21 b, l. 22) mentions a הקיסריני, who was perhaps a brother of the Aaron b. Judah יקסריני, to whom Solomon ha-Nasi sent his epistle on incest (see Steinschneider, *Cat. Lugd.*, p. 234), and who accordingly had lived at the beginning of the twelfth century. But it is impossible to identify him with our Natan, as the latter, in my opinion, did not live in Constantinople. Further on Simḥa Isaac (l. c., f. 22 a, l. 17) mentions among the Karaite scholars of Lithuania a Judah b. Daniel, together with his two sons, Daniel and Natan. But the latter also cannot possibly be our Natan b. Judah, as the literary activity of the Karaites in Lithuania only began in the sixteenth century, hence at the time when Byzantium was no longer Christian.

composed a polemical work against Saadiah. This fact also testifies to an earlier date for our author, for, as the present essay shows, the Karaites did not cease indulging in polemics against Saadiah till modern times, though they do so only incidentally. None of them, however, composed a special work of controversy. Other traces of Natan's polemics are hitherto unknown.

36. **Aaron b. Joseph**, or Aaron the Elder, the famous physician of philosophical training, Bible exegete, and liturgical poet, is one of the most prominent representatives of the later period of Karaite literature. Of special importance is his commentary on the Pentateuch, *ספר המבחר* (ed. Koslow, 1835), which he composed according to his own statement in 1292/3 (on Exod. xii. 2; fol. 14 b: *זה לי . . . ארבע עשרה שנה קודם זה הפירוש שנת ל"ט בפרט והיה לרבנים מולד חשרי ואנחנו ראינו הישן קרוב בזריחת השמש והראינו אותו לרבנים* ¹ (הנמצאים שם באותו מקום הנקרא סולכאט ובו' Saadiah is mentioned here only twice: (1) on Exod. xiii. 4 (fol. 19 b), on *אביב*. According to Saadiah's declaration, this verse speaks against the Karaite interpretation of *אביב* as ripeness of corn, for here the question is about the ripeness in Egypt, which takes place one month earlier than that in Palestine, and therefore cannot serve for the fixing of the months. Aaron replies that this verse would then also point against the Rabbanites, who likewise pay regard to the *אביב* (הפיתומי) חשב כי טען לקראים בשמור את חדש האביב באמרו כי אביב מצרים כבר (הושחת ולא ידע כי בנפשו הוא אליה). (2) On Lev. iv. 35 (fol. 7 a), on the use of the fat tail (אליה). Contrary to his custom elsewhere, Aaron deals with this subject rather fully. In this passage he already reverts to it a second time, and mentions the name of Saadiah only in connexion with an argument. In Lev. ix. 19-20, where *אליה* is included in the general concept of *חלבים*, the Karaites find a support for their prohibition of this fat tail. Saadiah refutes this

¹ For the literature on him see *Jew. Encycl.*, s. v. (I, 14). On the Mibhar cf. especially Jost, *Gesch. d. Judenthums*, II, 356 seq. It is not quite certain that Aaron lived in Constantinople.

argument by showing from Exod. xx. 8-10 and similar verses, that when two groups of things are enumerated, of which the one is much less than the other quantitatively, then only the larger group is mentioned, whilst the other is included in it (thus in ver. 20 only חלב is repeated, as this is greater quantitatively in comparison with כליות and יותרת הכבד of ver. 19). This view is opposed by Aaron in the following words: ואין טענת הפיתומי טענה שאמר מנהג העברי להזכיר הרוב ולהניח המעט הנה כי יתן איש אל רעהו חמור או שור או שה ושם כתוב וכל בהמה לשמור ואם נשבע השומר לשקר ישלם על כל דבר פשע על שור על חמור על שה ועל שלמה ולא יתכן שהבגדים נקראו בהמה . . . כן הנה מזכיר החלב ומניח הכליות והיותה ושמע תשובתו כבר האיש ר' סעדיא שכח בין פרשת שומר חנם לפרשת שומר¹. But Saadiah is also meant in the passage on iii. 9 (fol. 56), where several of his arguments are refuted: . . . הנה אלית הכבש קרבה למזבח וטעו המתירים אותה לאכילה עד שקצתם הוסיפו וי' ואמרו חלבו והאליה . . . ועוד טען כי חלבו שם כלל לחמשה הנזכרים . . . ועוד טען כי חלבו הוא כמו חלב יצהר וכו' (cf. *Gan Eden*, fol. 9 b; *Adderet*, ענין שחיטה, cap. 18. Apart from these passages Aaron must hint at Saadiah many times without mentioning his name.

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¹ Both these conclusions of Saadiah have hitherto not been known from older sources, so far as I am aware. Could Aaron perhaps have drawn them immediately from Saadiah?